

The Old Paths

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"Liberty In Christ"

Jarrod Jacobs

6:18, 22).

On July 4th, if the Lord wills, we will celebrate the 236th anniversary of the birth of this nation. In the beginning of this nation, a Declaration of Independence was written and signed by those whom we now call the "Founding Fathers." This document stated that God granted unto men "certain unalienable rights," among which are "Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness." Therefore, every July 4th, we pause to celebrate the anniversary of the day we declared our freedom, or liberty from England.

While celebrating freedom is a wonderful thing, have we considered the fact that God granted liberty to men long before this nation ever existed? When we read the Bible, we find the word "liberty" used 27 times, and the word "free" used 59 times. Consequently, the truth is that God, not man, has granted us liberty! In fact, He is the author of liberty or freedom. II Corinthians 3:17 states, "*Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.*" Liberty is a wonderful gift that God has given us. Therefore, even if a man or woman is enslaved in some foreign land, this one is still free in Christ. One may be enslaved by men, but a Christian is truly free (Jn. 8:36). Christians are free from sin and free from Satan, and this is true freedom.

How can we obtain this true liberty or freedom? The Bible tells

us how.

God's Word Brings Liberty.

David made this clear when he said, "*I will walk at liberty: for I have sought your precepts*" (Ps. 119:45). David understood the relationship between God's word and freedom. Isaiah and Jeremiah also used God's word to "*proclaim liberty*" to the people (Isa. 61:1; Jer. 34:8). Incidentally, Isaiah 61:1 was a prophecy concerning Jesus (Lk. 4:18-21). Therefore, not only was Isaiah using God's word to "*proclaim liberty*," but so was Christ when He spoke! James called God's will "*the perfect law of liberty*" (Jas. 1:25). Can there be a better description of God's word than this? God's word brings liberty to men! By following the word of God, one can be free from sin and Satan (Rom. 6:16-18).

Christ Brings Liberty.

We cannot separate the work of Christ and the work accomplished in His word. Christ came to bring spiritual liberty to men, and this is revealed in the written word. He said, "*If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed*" (Jn. 8:36). Our Lord sacrificed Himself for us that we might be delivered from the bondage of sin. His death on the cross and shed blood provided the means by which all men can be saved (free) from sin. It is for this reason that when those at Rome were "*obedient from the heart to that standard of teaching ...*", the Christians were then "*set free from sin*" (Rom.

Distinctions Between Spiritual Liberty And Spiritual Bondage

It seems obvious that there is a vast difference between liberty and bondage in the physical realm, but many do not recognize this difference in the spiritual realm. This fact is apparent when we look and see so many who are struggling in sin daily. Many love being in sin, and do not wish to change. These people do not recognize the difference between spiritual liberty and spiritual bondage!

Why would one wish to be in oppression and bondage when he could be free? The answer to this question seems obvious, yet, multitudes today remain enslaved in sin. Why is this? One reason why people refuse to leave the slavery of sin for freedom in Christ is because they have been deceived. Peter warned of false teachers who, "*promise them (the beguiled, v. 14, 18) liberty, but they themselves are slaves of corruption.*" Therefore, while people are fooled into believing one thing, the truth is exactly the opposite! They might think they are free, but they are actually in bondage. Why? "*For whatever overcomes a person, to that he is enslaved*" (II Pet. 2:19).

Men may think they are "free" when they: use drugs, drink alcohol, commit fornication, use God's name in vain, worship God when/how they please, etc. The truth is that such people are in bondage. They are in bondage to sin and to Satan who has fooled them into thinking that their actions are the result of "freedom," while serving God and worshipping Him "*in spirit and in truth*" is bondage. Of course, the exact opposite is true! May we open our eyes and see how Satan has us fooled. Spiritually speaking, this type of reasoning which looks upon sin as "freedom" and God's will as

"bondage" is exactly 180 degrees out of alignment! *"Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter!"* (Isa. 5:20). Sadly, this is where many people are today!

Conclusion

As we pray, it is right and proper to thank God for freedom in this country. It is also fun to shoot off fireworks, etc., in celebration of our nation's founding.

Yet, let us never forget nor take for granted the true freedom offered to men through Christ, as is revealed in the Bible. This spiritual freedom can be experienced in any place on earth, at any time of year, by any person (Gal. 3:28; Col. 3:11). Are you free from sin (Mk. 16:16)?

"HOW TO PRAY IN PUBLIC"

Jarrold Jacobs

Many times, we see some good brethren who do not want to lead a public prayer. When questioned as to why they do not wish to lead a public prayer, they say, "I do not know how to pray in public." Brother Gardner S. Hall, Sr. (1906-1978), was confronted with this problem and wrote down four suggestions which will help men with the public prayer. Please read these carefully.

1. Pray often in private so that you will be familiar with God and used to speaking to Him. Then when you lead prayer, think of Him (as you would any other time) and not of men (Ps. 88:1).

2. Do not make a sermon of

the prayer. It is true that prayer is to be understood by all being led, and it will edify them. But it is silly to pray (to God) by preaching (to men) as though God needed the reproving and rebuking people need (Jas. 1:17b)!

3. Do not try to be eloquent. Be sincere, fervent, humble, and respectful in talking to God as you would at any time; if you do that, it does not matter what men think about fancy words.

4. Give careful thought to what you say. Pray that we may prepare our lessons or may always worship God acceptably; instead of that "we may have" done such; it is too late if we have not! When praying at the Lord's table, do not pray the same prayer you would at the close of worship; think of the specific occasion of the prayer.

Hopefully, these suggestions will help all those who pray to become better. We need to remember, *"The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much"* (Jas. 5:16)! Let us all work on leading prayer in a better and more effective way. What a wonderful blessing prayer is! When we pray, we are talking to God Almighty. Surely, the songwriters were right when they wrote, "What a privilege to carry everything to God in

prayer"!

If we want to read about how to pray, and what the subjects of prayer might be, we need to read the prayers of Jesus (John 17, etc.), the apostles (Romans 10:1, etc.), and the early Christians (Acts 4:24-30, etc.). God has given us these great examples to study. Why not study these prayers that were offered to God and work to better ourselves in leading a public prayer?

"Points With A Punch!"

- ♦ Never put a question mark where God has put a period.
- ♦ If you are too busy to assemble with the Lord's people, you are overworked.
- ♦ Some say a little talk with Jesus makes it right, but Paul had a little talk and had to *"arise and be baptized"* (Acts 22:16).
- ♦ People who are spiritually blind rely on feeling for Heaven.
- ♦ A hundred people will search the woods for a lost boy but won't move an inch to save a soul.
- ♦ Some folks have more of their "thinks-so's" than the Lord's "say-so's" in their religion.

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